Vincent J. Mooney

Reid wrong on Israel

The column on Feb. 27 by Robert Reid incorrectly assesses the relationship between Israel and its neighbors. The column begins with a broad discussion of American foreign aid, and Mr. Reid is generally right there.

Then he starts on Israel and begins to err rapidly. He writes: "The Israelis have been constructing housing units at a frantic pace to create Jewish enclaves on land beyond their borders, in order to establish a legal foothold on the territory."

But Israel would dearly love to have safe, secure borders. The problem is that none of Israel's neighbors will do that. Must it be continuously thundered that Israel is surrounded by nations that have several times tried to destroy the country by military invasion?

Of course Israel has been led to conclude that its security is in doubt. Massacres of Jews have and still occur. Small scale military action against Israel has and still occurs.

Just whose legal territory is the West Bank? Mr. Reid does not say. Should it be like Jerusalem before 1967 when, as a divided city, Jews were not allowed in the Jordanial sector? Should it be like Gaza once was, a large training camp for terrorists to invade Israel?

In the 1960s, I was shocked by some Jewish friends who, on their return from Israel, showed me photos of kibbutzim that were shelled by Syrians from the Golan Heights.

Israel wants security and peace for itself and its neighbors. Its neighbors and the PLO will not allow that.

Mr. Reid also wrote: "The Israelis show little interest in either stopping the expansion in the occupied territories, or negotiating peace with the Arabs."

Nonsense!

The Israelis are as divided as are the people of any nation about what their country should do. But all would be delighted to find a lasting peaceful settlement with every country in the world, not merely the Arabs.

Israel has given land for peace – with Egypt. The Sinai was returned and a good peace treaty was signed with Egypt. The Egyptian president who signed the accord, Anwar Sadat, was assassinated for his efforts. I have met Egyptians and other Moslems who have applauded that killing. Their hatred for Israel must be without limit.

Israel would again give land for peace, if it could find a trustworthy partner in the peace process.

Who does Mr. Reid feel is trustworthy? The Jordanians who supported Saddam Hussein, gave him arms sent to Jordan, and have been a home for the PLO? The Syrians who have already occupied another country (Lebanon) and are the base for many terrorist groups? The Lebanese, to the extent there are any left with a free will as they stare at the guns of the Syrian Army, or the guns of the Iranian sponsored terrorists? The Iraqis who sent rockets into Israel when the war was with the Kuwaitis? Who can the Israelis trust?

In his column, Mr. Reid does make valid points and a single column (or even a book) cannot do the subject full justice.

I do not agree with all that Israel does. Some of what Israel has done is deeply, morally wrong and stupidly harmful to a peaceful solution. But the central point is that Israel's right to exist is what its enemies challenge and to meet that challenge, Israel is doing things it never dreamed would be necessary.

In face of its unique challenges, I applaud its restraint and end simply by noting that Israel is not the enemy and never has been.

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